

A Rottnest Puzzle.—The composition of the indigenous mammalian fauna of Rottnest Island has long been a matter of uncertainty. Today only one species, the Quokka, *Macropus (Setonix) brachyurus* (Q. & G.) is to be found there, yet we read in L. Freycinet's account of the island which appears in Chapter IX of Peron's "Voyage de Decouvertes aux Terres Australes," Vol. 1, 1st ed., 1807, on pp. 188-189: "Nous y avons observe une petite espeece de kangaroo de 65 centimetres de hauteur environs [2 pieds] qui s'y trouvoit tres-nombreuse. Nous y avons egalement reconnu une seconde espeece de quadrupede de la grosseur d'un rat tres—fort, que les anciens navigateurs hollandois ont effectivement pris pour un rat, mais qui, d'apres les observations de notre naturaliste M. Peron, appartient a un genre nouveau tres—remarquable, et dont la description doit se trouver dans la partie zoologique des travaux de cet estimable et laborieux naturaliste."

Unfortunately Peron died before the work was completed and so the promised description never appeared.

It has been generally held that the "petite espeece de kangaroo" referred to was the Quokka, still so plentiful on the island today, and the second species had become extinct. But a little reflection will cause one to realise that the animal measuring 65 cm. (2 feet) in height could not possibly have been the Quokka, which is a much smaller animal.

It seems, therefore, that there are two alternatives: Either the larger form has died out and only the smaller rat-like species—the Quokka—survived, or that a mistake has been made by including the Garden Island Tammar *Macropus eugenii derbianus* (Gray) in the Rottnest list.* There is no confirmatory evidence that the larger Macropod has ever existed on Rottnest. There are no records in the British Museum List of Mammals published in 1843 nor in the later Catalogue of Marsupials of 1887, though the Tammar from Garden Island is referred to in both volumes. Further, Waterhouse's Marsupiata of 1846 makes no mention of its presence on Rottnest nor have I ever in my many trips to the island seen any Macropod skulls that could not be ascribed to *M. brachyurus*.

I would therefore suggest that a mistake has been made in the French account that the larger species mentioned was obtained on Garden Island (Buache) and that the smaller remarkable species is none other than the Quokka, which fortunately is still flourishing on the island. May it long continue to do so for I fear its days are numbered in its restricted habitat on the south-western mainland.

L. GLAUERT, W.A. Museum, Perth.

*The life reported on Garden Island (Ile Buache) consisted of "partridges, crows, smaller than those of Europe, and seals." No mention is made of the Tammar which was common there in 1829.